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DE RUEHNT #0553 1360400  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 150400Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9658  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3961  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0174  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4576  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0455  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0379  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0454  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4182  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2463  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0494  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1127  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0127  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7409  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0266  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2467  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1186  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1809  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC 0039  
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: GOVERNMENT DENIES REPORTS OF SMALLPOX

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (SBU) Uzbekistan's Ministry of Health has denied reports that two cases of hemorrhagic smallpox originating from Karakalpakstan have appeared in Tashkent. (Note: These claims have surfaced in the Russian press and the internet website [www.centrasia.ru](http://www.centrasia.ru). End note.) Chief Public Health Officer and Deputy Health Minister Bakhtiyer Niyazmatov said that Vozrozhdenia Island in the Aral Sea is "under the control of the appropriate ministries and agencies... as far as we know, there are no smallpox agents left there."

¶2. (C) Given the Government of Uzbekistan's track record of denying both the occurrence of measles outbreaks in the country as well as recent instances of HIV transmission in Andijon hospitals, and Niyazmatov's habit of stonewalling against inquiries about such topics, we are not convinced that Uzbekistan would tell us even if there was a smallpox problem. This notwithstanding, our locally-employed staff member who monitors the news feels that the whole exchange has the look and feel of Russian provocation in response to cooling relations. At this point, we are not aware of any verifiable evidence of smallpox in Uzbekistan but are monitoring this closely, in conjunction with officials from CDC and other U.S. agencies with offices here.  
NORLAND